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U.S. LAWMAKERS REACH DEAL ON $900BN STIMULUS PACKAGE

Top Capitol Hill negotiators have sealed a $900-billion Covid-19 economic relief package for businesses as well as individuals

DIRECT BENEFITS TRANSFER TO AMERICANS

The agreement, announced by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on Sunday, would establish a temporary $300 per week supplemental jobless benefit and a $600 direct stimulus payment to most Americans, along with a new round of subsidies for hard-hit businesses and money for schools, health care providers and renters facing eviction

MORE STIMULUS MEASURES ON THE CARDS

- The agreement came after months of battling and posturing
- Delays in finalising the pact prompted the House to pass a one-day stopgap spending bill to prevent a govt shutdown on Sunday
- "In 31 days, when Joe Biden enters the White House, more help will be on the way," said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi | PTI

2nd largest

STIMULUS PACKAGE AFTER THE $2.3-TN PACT ANNOUNCED IN MARCH 2020

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • WARANGAL • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

THUS SPAKE CHIEF MINISTER

The government is taking steps to ensure that investor sentiment is not affected

We will extend all possible support to companies

Wistron and Toyota incidents will not impact Brand Karnataka

We are committed to hold the Global Investors Meet 2020-21

FULL INTERVIEW ON | P4

CM: Wistron violence will not dent Brand Karnataka

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

A week after violence at Wistron's iPhone manufacturing plant at Narasapura in Kolar, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said it was a stray incident that has been addressed adequately and it will not affect the Brand Karnataka image.

The large-scale violence by workers hit national and international headlines, catching the attention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The State Government, competing with neighbouring states to attract investments, was planning to hold the Global Investors Meet (GIM) this year, but could not due to Covid. Yediyurappa told *The New Indian Express* that the State Government stands by its earlier decision of holding GIM 2020-21. "But appropriate decision will be taken depending on the industrial scenario post the Covid situation," he said.

On the Wistron violence and labour unrest at the Toyota Kirloskar Plant in Bidadi, he said they are one-off incidents. "We have been in constant touch with both the companies. The Government of India and we are taking steps to ensure that investor sentiment is not affected," he added.

After the violence at Wistron on December 12, the police, taking swift action, arrested all 128 workers for vandalising the office premises.

Minister for Small and Large-Scale Industries Jagadish Shettar said the government is not ruling out the possibility of violence being premeditated. "The deputy commissioner and police are conducting the inquiry, and we will get a clear picture once the probe is done."

He too said the incident will not damage Brand Karnataka as the state is always known for its industry-friendly policy. "We have told the company authorities that the government will extend all facilities and cooperation. We will also provide them with police protection. We appeal to them to restart the unit at the earliest," he said.

> We have been in constant touch with both the companies (Wistron and Toyota). The Government of India and we are taking steps to ensure that investor sentiment is not affected -- B S Yeddiyurappa, CM

India too imposes UK flight ban

Temporary curbs from Tuesday midnight till December 31 as new Covid strain found 70% more transmissible than the original one; All passengers who have come in to be tested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

INDIA on Monday joined a slew of nations that temporarily barred flights from the UK to firewall themselves from a highly infectious strain of Covid-19 that was recently detected in Britain. The variant, called N501Y, is 70% more transmissible than the original Covid strain, and has already been found elsewhere, including Denmark, the Netherlands and Australia.

The suspension of flights comes into effect from Tuesday midnight and will continue till December 31. The decision was taken following recommendations by the Covid-19 joint monitoring group and the Covid-19 national task force whose emergency meetings were held on Monday.

As a measure of abundant caution, passengers arriving from the UK in all transit flights (flights that have taken off or those that will reach before the ban comes into effect) will be mandatorily subjected to RT-PCR tests on arrival to detect Covid-19 cases.

Those testing positive will be under mandatory institutional quarantine. States have been advised to also monitor those who test negative; they need to remain in isolation for at least seven days at home.

Sources in the Health Ministry said scientists and the ICMR have sounded out to keep a watch for any new strain of Covid in any part of the country even though the pandemic seems to have stabilised in most parts of India over the last several weeks. P10

MUTATED VIRUS FOOTPRINT

First found in Kent in the UK on Sept 20, later in Wales and London. Also in Greater Glasgow in Scotland

- 9 cases in Denmark
- 1 each in the Netherlands and Italy
- 4 in Belgium
- 2 in Australia

FLIGHT STATS

60+

Weekly flights by Air India and others including Vistara and British Airways between India and the UK

Air bubble

Arrangement exists between the 2 countries

Vistara has one daily London flight from Delhi

Air India has **23 FLIGHTS** to the UK per week. Also started the Delhi-Amritsar-Birmingham sector on December 11

138 flyers from UK slip into K'taka without test

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

AT least 138 air passengers arriving from the United Kingdom, where a new variant of SARS-CoV-2 virus was reported a fortnight ago, have entered Karnataka after flying in without Covid-19 negative certificates or being subjected to tests on arrival.

With the Civil Aviation Ministry banning all incoming flights from the UK, and the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry issuing directions on Monday to all states and Union territories to put in place testing and quarantine protocols for air travellers on arrival from the UK, the State Government is now tracing these passengers.

The State Government is yet to establish how many such air travellers have arrived in Karnataka from the UK over the past fortnight.

The state Health and Family Welfare Department on Monday evening issued a circular directing Bengaluru and Mangaluru international airports to provide the lists of passengers who have arrived from the UK from since December 7.

Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar revealed that on Sunday and Monday, of the 291 air passengers who arrived from the UK on a British Airways flight, 49 travelled without Covid-19 certificates, and neither were they subjected to RT-PCR tests. Of the 246 passengers who arrived on an Air-India flight, 89 came without a Covid negative certificate and remained untested.

"These passengers are asymptomatic, but for safety, we have sought their details from the civil aviation ministry and are tracing them. Once traced, RT-PCR tests will be conducted on them," said Sudhakar.

CONTINUED ON: P3

EXPRESS READ

Sensex sinks 1,407 pts amid new Covid-19 fears

Mumbai: Sensex crashed 1,407 points on Monday as a new strain of the coronavirus in the UK clobbered global markets. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tanked 432.15 points or 3.14 per cent to finish at 13,328.40.

Cong leader Motilal Vora passes away at 93

New Delhi: Veteran Congress leader Motilal Vora, a staunch Gandhi family loyalist who had a political career spanning almost five decades, died at a hospital here on Monday following post-Covid-19 complications, his family said. He was 93. P9

Actor Arjun Rampal questioned by NCB

Mumbai: Bollywood actor Arjun Rampal was on Monday questioned for nearly six hours by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in connection with a drug case lodged following the death of filmstar Sushant Singh Rajput, an official said.

Five projects cleared, likely to create 13K jobs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE State High-Level Clearance Committee (SHLCC) headed by Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa has given clearance for five projects that bring in investment of ₹26,659 crore, and are expected to generate employment for 13,341 people.

Clearance was given for five companies at the SHLCC meeting held on Monday. Elest Pvt Ltd plans to set up an electric vehicle manufacturing unit on 85 acres in Hubballi-Dharwad, with an estimated investment of ₹14,255 crore, and will create 867 jobs. The same company was given clearance to establish a lithium-ion cells and battery manufacturing unit on 88 acres in Hubballi-Dharwad, with an investment of ₹6,339 crore, and is expected to generate 1,804 jobs.

Hyunet Private Ltd, which is setting up a plant to manufacture lithium batteries and electric vehicles on 300 acres in Chikkaballapura, is expected to invest ₹1,825 crore and create employment for 2,210 people. Hyderabad-based Miraculum Green Power Pvt Ltd was given clearance to establish a 110-MW hybrid wind solar power project at an investment of ₹1,290 crore. The project, coming up on 700 acres in Jagalur taluk of Davanagere is likely to create 2,820 jobs.

Another Hyderabad-based firm, Sanali Power Pvt Ltd, will also up a hybrid wind solar power project on 1,710 acres in Jagalur taluk of Davanagere. It will invest ₹2,950 crore and is expected to create 5,640 jobs.

New strain can't dodge vaccines, say experts

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA & CHETANA BELAGERE @New Delhi / Bengaluru

JUST as we thought the end of pandemic was in sight, a new mutation of SARS CoV 2 — detected in the UK — has brought fresh concerns. The discovery has also put a question mark over the Covid vaccines in the works. Will the vaccines be effective against the new strain?

However, experts say the vaccines will be effective against the new strain as well. Virologists point out that viruses mutate all the time; while there is no need for panic, there is no room for complacency either.

"Though the mutation is said to have caused havoc in the UK, we don't have to panic," said Dr T Jacob John, virologist and ex-professor at Christian Medical College, Vellore. "However, we may have to buy a couple of weeks to not let the virus enter and spread fast and burden our healthcare system," he added. P3,10

Consumer's king, discoms to pay for poor service

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

ELECTRICITY consumers in India now have the right to uninterrupted quality power supply, with the Centre on Monday notifying the Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules. The new guidelines also mandate distribution companies (discoms) to provide new connections within seven days in metro cities, 15 days in small towns, and 30 days in rural areas. Discoms that don't meet these standards will have to pay consumers.

Union Power Minister R K Singh said consumers' rights had to be laid down in Rules since discoms were acting as monopolies and users had no alternatives.

The rules stipulate that discoms must supply power on request from the occupier of any premises, and that minimum standards of service is consumers' right. Also, discoms have to supply power 24x7, except for areas such as agriculture where continuous power is not required. Discoms are also required to put in place systems — preferably automated — for monitoring and restoring outages.

According to Power Ministry officials, since electricity is a subject on the concurrent list, the new rules will have to be followed by discoms in all states.

While the respective regulatory commissions may set standards of compliance, any violation of these standards will result in the discom paying compensation to the customer.

The amount to be paid for each type of standard violation will also be notified by the respective commissions. The compensation mechanism is also required to be automatic.

DAM IMPACT

28 villages to sink with last poll hurrah

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @Tumakuru

THESE 28 villages will not face Gram Panchayat elections ever again. Over the next five years, all these hamlets from Koratagere taluk in Tumakuru district and Doddaballapur taluk in Bengaluru Rural will disappear from the face of the earth, as they will be acquired for Bhyragondlu dam, which is being built as part of the multi-crore Yettinahole irrigation project.

The emotional and economic cost is huge on these villagers, but they are putting up a brave front and facing this last election with enthusiasm. The common thread of worry among the villagers is the low compensation package being offered for their land to be acquired for the project, which is the major poll issue here. "We have been told that ₹14 lakh per acre has been fixed which is not justifiable. That is the reason we have put up educated people, like S H Ravikumar from Sunkadahalli and Sujatha M Shivaraj from Kaluvehalli, to contest the Chinnahalli GP elections. Once elected, they can fight for better compensation for us," said V Siddagangaiah, a teacher.

Local farmers holding a demonstration in Tumakuru recently | EXPRESS

Of the villages that will disappear, Sunkadahalli is special, as it has a history of over 300 years and is just 8 km away from Manne, the capital of the Ganga dynasty. But still, there is hope against hope. Nagendrappa, who is one of the candidates contesting the election, wished that the village will not go under water. He suggested that instead of building the Yettinahole project, the government should fill up 38 tanks in the district.

"It is painful to see our village, where we were born, disappearing. People here are only delaying the inevitable and have not yet planned where to relocate from here," he added ruefully. P7

SBI

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Date of e-Auction: 30th December, 2020

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